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# Democratizing Dance: Institutional Transformation and Hegemonic Re-Ordering in Postcolonial Jamaica

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# Democratizing Dance: Institutional Transformation and Hegemonic Re-Ordering in Postcolonial Jamaica

## **Disciplines**

Social and Cultural Anthropology

# Democratizing Dance: Institutional Transformation and Hegemonic Re-Ordering in Postcolonial Jamaica

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As someone who has been trained to privilege political economy over other modes of analysis, my attention to performance—and to the historical trajectories of various kinds of dance performance in particular—has generally been geared toward understanding what it can tell us about people’s social, economic, and political consciousness and practice over time. First as a professional dancer and then as an anthropologist, performance for me has been a point of entry—a way to learn about unfamiliar people and places, to view complex and shifting relations of power and inequality, and to delight in the myriad creative ways people make sense of (and change) their lives. As a result, my metaphors may be a bit more structural than those of others’. I see the physicality of the body as the viscerally syntactical extension of the unpredictable movements of institutions through time and space (including transnational space), the body in motion (dancing on stage, dancing through space) as analogous to institutions in motion, and the movement of the body as reflecting social movement(s). This article is an analysis of the competing rhythms to which these bodies move, or less metaphorically speaking, of the relationship between dance and constructions of identity in the contexts of anticolonial nationalism and globalization.

In Jamaica, as in most post–World War II “new nations,” efforts to define a national cultural identity emerged hand in hand with the development of political nationalism, and artistic representations of nationhood became critical arenas in which anticolonial struggles were waged. As discussed below, several scholars have demonstrated that defining and institutionalizing national cultural identities are never value-neutral activities. Rather, they are simultaneously processes of celebration and containment. Indeed, an extensive literature has developed that addresses the messy relationship between culture and nationalism and the ways that nationalism’s universalizing aspects have been dependent on simultaneous projects of exclusion.<sup>1</sup> To clarify the relationship between cultural and political nationalisms, Michel-Rolph Trouillot has argued that “the nation

is not necessarily a cultural construct *backed* by political power. Rather, it is a cultural construct that offers some claim to homogeneity *in relation to* political power" (1990:25). In this view, anticolonial nationalisms are best conceptualized as cultural contests between the hegemonic project of nationalist modernity and popular challenges to that project at various levels (Joseph and Nugent 1994).

To make sense of the stubborn persistence of aspects of the colonial status quo after the achievement of political independence, several scholars have focused on the ways 20th-century political and cultural nationalist elites have tended to reproduce racialized, classed, and gendered hierarchies of power in the post-colonial period, both institutionally and subjectively (Williams 1991, 1993), and on how they have sometimes generated new dimensions of inequality through their ambivalence toward Western modernity (Chatterjee 1991, 1993; Wippers 1972). What I would like to do here is to take a long view of institutional change and its potential for social transformation. The questions that will concern me in this discussion have to do with the more general implications of democratizing institutions; by this I mean not only broadening the cultural content on which institutions bestow legitimacy but also extending access to them to people previously excluded. More specifically, does this increased access to institutions necessarily entail a fundamental shift not only in the content and values they promote but also in the viability of the institutions themselves? What are the contexts in which, and the processes by which, institutions gain and lose relevance? What is the fate of nationalist institutions within the current context of intensified globalization as the power of individual states to socialize their citizenries has declined? What I will present is merely one case at one particular historical moment that marks a partial hegemonic re-ordering in postcolonial Jamaica. Nevertheless, within the current context of a more general disillusionment with the promises of anticolonial nationalism around the globe and a growing frustration with the constraints to structural change presented by the contemporary global economy, it is helpful to focus on specific institutions to more clearly apprehend potential (and actual) slippages in the social reproduction of power and inequality.

As a case study for this analytical journey, I will examine the development of Jamaican dance, specifically the National Dance Theater Company of Jamaica (NDTC), since dance has held a privileged position within the nexus of Jamaican nationalist cultural production.<sup>2</sup> I begin by examining the ways the founders of the NDTC were part of a more general anticolonial movement to change the Eurocentric orientation of cultural institutions in Jamaica toward one that would more accurately reflect the cultural history of the Caribbean. Next, I outline the institutional web that the NDTC established to further democratize participation in the performing arts. I then explore the ways subsequent generations of NDTC performers related to the company's original conceptualizations of belonging and examine the relative importance of service, reciprocity, blackness, and popular culture. I argue that generational differences are both classed and gendered. Finally, I conclude with more general

comments regarding the relationship between institutional transformation, nationalism, and globalization.<sup>3</sup>

### **Institutionalizing Culture**

Black Jamaicans have always created and maintained their own forms of cultural expression. These forms have emerged from, and been supported by, the social, economic, and religious institutions that evolved during the slavery and postemancipation periods. They have also been shaped by their interactions with those institutions imposed upon them. In addition, there has always existed in Jamaica an exposure to elite expressive cultural forms from abroad. For example, as early as the mid-1700s, theatrical companies from England and the North American colonies toured the island, and during the late 1800s and early 1900s, European opera companies often stopped in Jamaica on their way from Cuba to South America (Baxter 1970; Wright 1986). Not until the establishment of Crown Colony rule in 1866, however, were institutions established locally to cater to a growing middle-class audience within Jamaica.

Although these institutions upheld an ideology of British cultural superiority, they nevertheless provided the structures within which elite and middle-class Jamaicans would reframe the parameters of “legitimate” culture by encouraging more conscious attention to the needs and experiences of the population. In doing so, they ultimately challenged the legitimacy of colonial rule.<sup>4</sup> Throughout this same period, nonelite Jamaicans such as Marcus Garvey also established organizations and cultural institutions that asserted a more black-nationalist framework.<sup>5</sup> However, between the 1940s and independence in 1962, the anticolonial political and intellectual elite consolidated the hegemony of creole multiracial nationalism—an “Out of Many, One People” ideological framework that deflected active relationships to contemporary struggles in Africa and contained the development of other mobilizing ideologies along class or racial lines within the nationalist movement. For example, during the 1930s various versions of black nationalism gained increased popularity among Jamaicans as a result of Marcus Garvey’s establishment of the Universal Negro Improvement Association,<sup>6</sup> Mussolini’s October 1935 invasion of Ethiopia, the extensive migration of Jamaican laborers to Cuba, Central America, and the United States during the latter half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, and the elaboration of Rastafarianism.<sup>7</sup> Also, during the 1930s and 1940s, a small but influential group of educated professionals inspired by Marxist praxis became involved in the nationalist movement through the People’s National Party (PNP), Jamaica’s first political party. Nevertheless, the expulsion of the left wing from organized party politics in 1952 solidified Western political and economic structures administered by the local middle-class intelligentsia.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, the creole multiracial nationalism that was consolidated in Jamaica between the 1940s and the 1960s entailed a search for a cultural identity that would legitimate the nation as modern and progress oriented, while at the same time foregrounding a vision of Jamaica’s cultural uniqueness

as rooted in select sacred and secular practices developed by black Jamaicans during and after the period of slavery. The nationalist intelligentsia's emphasis on the equality of all racial groups in the building of the new nation nevertheless reproduced aspects of the class/color/cultural hierarchies that were solidified during the colonial period. As the new arbiters of cultural taste, they ironically facilitated the continuation of class domination whereby they, as the new ruling group, would act as cultural and political guardians of the lower classes. At the same time, their efforts to elevate aspects of Jamaican "folk" culture to the realm of the "cultured" did significantly transform the scope of cultural institutions by successfully promoting the idea that Jamaica too possessed a culture that was not only as legitimate as British culture but also more relevant to the surroundings and experiences of the majority of the population.

### **NDTC: Roots and Rhythm**

During the immediate preindependence period, the flowering of artistic activity geared toward countering colonial claims to cultural superiority locally—and toward representing Jamaica's heritage in public forums internationally—set the stage for the establishment of the NDTC in 1962. Though a tradition of variety and vaudeville shows existed prior to the 1950s, concert dance venues during that period privileged the performance of ballet. Several ballet studios existed but only one, that of Hazel Johnston, admitted Jamaican girls who were not white. In 1950, Ivy Baxter, one of Johnston's students, founded the Ivy Baxter Creative Dance Group, the first Jamaican dance company to incorporate into an American modern dance movement vocabulary the sacred and secular dance forms that black Jamaicans had developed during and after slavery.<sup>9</sup> Summer dance workshops sponsored by the extramural department at the University College of the West Indies also helped to facilitate regional collaboration in developing locally rooted cultural aesthetics.<sup>10</sup> The 1951 visit of Katherine Dunham's group to Jamaica, the 1959 founding of the Trinidad Theatre Workshop by Derek Walcott, and consciousness of artistic production in revolutionary Cuba provided additional inspiration toward the development of a locally rooted dance-theater idiom during the 1950s and 1960s.

By the late 1950s, Rex Nettleford and Eddy Thomas had joined Ivy Baxter's group. Both had recently returned to Jamaica from stints abroad. Thomas, who was awarded an arts travel grant from the Jamaican government through the British Council, had been studying dance in New York. Nettleford, who had produced variety shows as a young man in rural Western Jamaica, had been studying in Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship. Having completed his undergraduate degree in history at the University of the West Indies (where he also founded the University Dance Society), on his return from Oxford, Nettleford accepted a position with the University of the West Indies extramural department. In addition to dancing and choreographing for Baxter's group, Thomas and Nettleford also worked with an amalgamation of dancers from the various studios who performed in the yearly Christmas pantomimes. After coordinating a tour of these dancers to Washington, D.C., where they presented a concert titled

*Sun over the West Indies* at Howard University in 1961, they organized a show called *Roots and Rhythms* for the Jamaican independence celebrations in 1962. As the independence show closed, Nettleford proposed the idea of creating a national company, and so dancers from the Hazel Johnston Ballet School, the Ivy Baxter Creative Dance Group, the Faye Simpson School of Ballet, the Soohih School of Dance, Misses Betty and Punky Rowe's School, Barbara Fonseca's studio, the Gordon Rumsey School, and the Eddy Thomas Dance Workshop came together to form the NDTC.

The NDTC foregrounded a creole image of the nation as a stable multiracial society in which all elements could combine and work together for the common good, thereby reflecting the national motto, "Out of Many, One People." The original mission statement of the NDTC was fourfold:

1) to provide a vehicle for well-trained and talented dancers who wish to perform and create works of excellence, that is, works of standards comparable to those found in any other part of the world; 2) to help widen an informed and critical Jamaican audience that will be responsive to works of excellence in the theatre arts, particularly theatre-dance; 3) to experiment with dance forms and techniques of all kinds with a view to helping to develop a style and form that faithfully reflects the movement patterns of Jamaica and the Caribbean area; 4) to encourage and, where possible, conduct research into indigenous dance forms in Jamaica and the Caribbean area. [Nettleford 1985:40]

The founders of the NDTC viewed dance as a catalyst for social change and dedicated themselves to turning a hegemonic orientation toward European forms of expression, such as ballet, into one that celebrated those dance forms that were indigenous to the Caribbean, and specifically Jamaica. The style of dance toward which the NDTC worked was one that would evoke Jamaica's multicultural history: "the melody of Europe playing on the rhythm of Africa . . . [and] the latter-day incursions from a cacophonous and dynamic North America which is a mere one and a half air hours away" (Nettleford 1969:32). Further, in establishing the company, Nettleford's goal was to provide an institutional model for Third World performing arts organizations that is "community-oriented in objective, national in scope, international in recognition, professional in standards, and amateur in status" (Nettleford 1985:272).<sup>11</sup> Charting these ambitions within the context of intensely entrenched colonialism was remarkable. Realizing them has been one of the greatest achievements within postcolonial Jamaica.

The company's early repertory included many dances depicting Jamaican folklife and religious rituals,<sup>12</sup> some of which required company members to perform extensive ethnographic research. Sheila Barnett, a founding member of the company, remembered that researching the dances that had evolved from rural black Jamaicans' "folk" traditions helped the original NDTC members to reclaim a heritage that they as "mostly middle-class people" had been denied:

We discover[ed] ourselves and [saw] that the [ritual] acts themselves represented our identity and could bring us together. If you don't know your own culture, you don't know yourselves. And so, the objectives of the NDTC were to go to the traditional sources as source, but not to use the source directly as it's used in its traditional context and put it on a stage because that won't work. We went out and we did research and we analyzed and we looked at the essence, got the feel of the thing, and then choreographed. [Sheila Barnett, author interview, 1993]

Although the NDTC repertory grew to include dances rooted in a Martha Graham-based modern idiom,<sup>13</sup> the company also continued its exploration into the capacity for dance to address and comment on historical and current social phenomena, as well as into the legends of Jamaica and the African background of Caribbean "folk" cultural practices.<sup>14</sup>

For Nettleford and the original company members, the NDTC's emphasis on Jamaica's African heritage was not directed toward the development of a black-nationalist sensibility, and their vision of Africa itself was not one that was based on the diversity of the continent's contemporary realities. Rather, theirs was an endeavor to revalue an African heritage in light of its contribution to Jamaican development, to recuperate "folk" practices as appropriate source material for creative pursuits. This conceptualization of Africa is, of course, not unique to the NDTC but is common to much of the cultural production of people of African descent throughout the diaspora who are seeking to reclaim and revalidate a history that was relegated to backwardness and inferiority throughout the colonial period. As Nettleford has stated:

You have to demonstrate the capacity of people of African ancestry to achieve things of excellence, not because they're African, but because they are human. . . . So what you are really saying is given the opportunity, anything is possible. It has nothing to do with racial origin. [Rex Nettleford, author interview, 1996]

Although Nettleford's choreography includes works that explore the adversities Jamaicans have experienced, both past and present, audiences are not typically left with images of black Jamaicans burning down sugarcane plantations, striking on banana estates, or holding street-corner meetings to challenge the status quo.<sup>15</sup> Rather, these kinds of activities are only nominally referenced in dances such as "The Crossing" (1978, chor. Rex Nettleford) (see cover photo). This dance, inspired by Alex Haley's *Roots*, was choreographed to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. It depicts the plantation history of Jamaica as a moment within a relatively linear struggle toward self-government and independence in which Jamaicans (indeed, all Americans), dispersed from their ancestral homes, became united around the emergence of an indigenous (i.e., creole) cultural ethos. Even those dances that have addressed social phenomena viewed as threatening to the unifying nationalist project have ultimately recast these phenomena as blips within a triumphal narrative. "Two Drums for Babylon" (1964, chor. Rex Nettleford), for example, an early and prophetic reflection on the influence of Rasta on Jamaican society, approaches the tension between the values of middle-class Jamaicans (portrayed



as eurocentric, sterile, and female) and the more racially centered expressions of community identity emanating from the poorer population (portrayed as visceral, liberatory, and male).<sup>16</sup> Although the dance leaves unanswered the question of exactly how this tension should be resolved, the implicit assumption remains that a sense of national belonging rooted in a creole ethos would prevail over an assertion of racial mobilization. Later works would foreground reggae music as the voice of the downtrodden and more openly celebrate Rastafarianism as an indigenously developed sociopolitical worldview, suggesting a modified assessment of where blackness and Africanness should stand in relation to defining a Jamaican cultural identity.

### **The NDTC in Relation to National Cultural Politics**

These kinds of changes within the NDTC's representations of Jamaican culture reflected broader societal shifts during the postindependence period. As I noted earlier, the creole multiracial nationalism that was consolidated by Jamaica's independence in 1962 was not a black nationalism that viewed all of those of African descent as sharing the same destiny. It was, rather, a narrower assertion of a specifically Jamaican identity that more closely resembled classical European nationalisms. That is, it was founded on a concept of common history and culture rather than race and, as in Europe, obscured the conflation of class with race. The nationalist political and intellectual elite's emphasis on the equality of all racial groups in the building of the new nation, while striving for universalism and inclusiveness, also facilitated the continued hegemony of colonial values, thus legitimizing class domination whereby new ruling groups would serve as guardians to the lower classes. The hegemony of this nationalist ideology, however, was relatively fragile, as many poor Jamaicans continued to mobilize against class deprivations through a racialized vision of community and solidarity throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Gray 1991; Stone 1973).

Indeed, the 1960s were a period of intense ideological and cultural upheaval during which cultural politics informed the class and color conflicts that challenged the newly independent Jamaican state. Several varieties of radicalism developed during this decade. For example, the grassroots action manifest through the Henry Rebellion of 1960,<sup>17</sup> the reprisal of the People's Political Party in that same year,<sup>18</sup> the Coral Gardens and anti-Chinese disturbances in 1963 and 1965,<sup>19</sup> and the so-called Rodney Riots of 1968 all left chinks in the armor of the creole multiracial nationalist state.<sup>20</sup> During the 1960s, poor, urban Jamaicans embodied their critiques of multiracial harmony through the ideological frameworks of Rastafari and *Rudie*, the latter a personification of racial protest combined with a class-antagonistic morality among the militant poor.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, a significant transition had occurred within the expressive cultural production of lower-class Jamaicans: urban commercial music began to supplant rural village-based mento bands (Stolzoff 2000; White 1984). As ska music became a driving force not only of black lower-class culture but also of national culture, it more openly challenged the dominant sociopolitical system and became increasingly militant throughout the 1960s,

alarming many among the middle and upper classes (Stolzoff 2000; White 1967). This reassertion of black nationalism presented a major political and ideological dilemma for the state, not least because the articulation of protest in explicitly racial terms began to block the traditional alliance between the middle class and the unemployed.

Although many among the middle classes viewed the return of racial sentiment within the public sphere of politics and culture as atavistic, others were inspired by Rastafarian messages to value their own African past (Brodber 1987; Brodber and Greene 1988; Chevannes 1976; Nettleford 1970). In other words, it was not just the urban poor whose social and political consciousness was galvanized by black-nationalist ideologies. Together, Rasta and Rudie were also the two principal cultural reference points for the generation of middle-class radicals that became politicized during the 1960s (Lewis 1994).<sup>22</sup> For many among the professional middle classes, then, the attraction of racially based conceptions of citizenship also lay in the central contradiction confronting them after independence. They had acquired political power and social mobility, but because they were excluded from any significant control over economic resources in land and in the growing manufacturing and tourism industries, their wealth did not grow. Within this context, Michael Manley, the leader of the People's National Party between 1969 and 1991, had managed to construct a broad alliance of nationalist and progressive elements in the local middle classes, workers, peasantry, and unemployed—especially youth and Rastafarians. With the election of the PNP in 1972, the newly radicalized members of the middle classes attempted to develop, through the PNP, a strong state sector in order to circumscribe the power of the old elite and to consolidate the economic and political power of the new rising elite.

Manley's government nationalized key sectors of Jamaica's economy and initiated several new social programs. The state also played an active role in repositioning Jamaica internationally and in redefining national identity internally. Membership in the Non-Aligned Movement diverted focus from the British Commonwealth by promoting a strong identification with Africa and the rest of the Third World.<sup>23</sup> In the atmosphere of increased international racial and feminist consciousness, Jamaicans were encouraged to organize for local development around identities that did not have local boundaries—as workers, as black people, as women.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, by 1968, class consciousness among poorer Jamaicans was converging with an increasing cultural assertiveness, and Rasta's emphasis on African roots, black redemption, and social awareness began to displace the Rude Boy variety of socioeconomic and political critique. The voice of the downtown "sufferer" came to the fore—both locally and in international musical arenas—as reggae music regularly and openly protested the gap between rich and poor. This merging of Rasta consciousness with reggae affected the whole society, not least during the elections in 1972 and 1976, when the PNP successfully mobilized around these symbols of black lower-class experience (Waters 1985). Still, this new focus was not explicitly a black-nationalist one. Despite heightened racial consciousness, Jamaica's struggles

during this period were framed within the language of class and class conflict, universal socialist formulations that were to absorb, and eventually neutralize, blackness into working-class comradeship.

Ultimately, the challenges to creole multiracial nationalism during the 1970s failed because the government was unable to generate consistent growth within the economy. The escalation of violent crime and the PNP's declaration of democratic socialism in 1976 destroyed the class confidence of the local elite and a large percentage of Jamaica's middle class. In the midst of serious personal economic decline, many of these families left Jamaica during this period, taking their money with them.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the government's renewed ties with Cuba fueled the JLP's anticommunist campaign and worried the United States enough to launch a CIA campaign to destabilize the Manley administration (Bolles 1996:29).<sup>26</sup>

The 1980 election of the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) under Edward Seaga inaugurated a new period of conservatism. As prime minister, Seaga ended Manley's social programs, shifted Jamaica's economy from import substitution to free-market capitalism, and cut diplomatic relations with Cuba. With the new probusiness political atmosphere, many among the ethnic minorities who had migrated returned, thereby both displacing black proprietors who had rented their properties and run their businesses and competing with newly established black businesses, many of which folded as a result.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, layoffs and employment cutbacks in the public sector weakened the position of middle-class black Jamaicans. Seaga's collaboration with Ronald Reagan on the Caribbean Basin Initiative realigned Jamaica's foreign relations with the United States and through that country, toward the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. As a result, structural-adjustment policies (SAPs) designed to make Jamaica more hospitable to foreign investment subjected the population more directly to the whims of international capital. The increase in international aid also reduced the market share of commerce for *higglers* since the foreign-exchange shortages that had facilitated the growth of the higgler trade were removed.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, Jamaica's dependence on U.S. loans forced the government to implement severe antiganja campaigns, thereby reducing a significant source of capital accumulation. Moreover, import-deregulation policies placed local manufacturers and farmers in the position of having to compete with imported goods that were selling at lower prices. These policy shifts resulted not only in an escalation of poverty, social and political violence, and migration but also in a reestablishment of the hegemony of whiteness and a "quiet ridiculing and denigration of blackness" (Robotham 1993:12). The message to the local population was that blackness, nonalignment, and democratic socialism had brought the country to ruin, and the JLP's economic policies helped to restore old class/color hierarchies.

Within this context, dancehall—the music and associated culture of a new generation of "sufferers" and Rude Boys—became increasingly popular in the mid-1980s and especially after the death of Bob Marley. Where previous reggae music had emphasized social critique and a belief in redemption, early

dancehall music reflected a ghetto glorification of sex, guns, and the drug trade. This led many observers to refer to dancehall derisively as “slackness” music, vulgarly degrading to Jamaica’s moral fiber. Arguments such as these, framed in terms of morality, also speak to an ongoing concern—a fear even—among the middle classes regarding the relative power of popular culture to shape both behavior and public perceptions of Jamaica and Jamaicans. As Norman Stolzoff (2000) has astutely noted, the view that “moral crisis” and “social breakdown” are rooted in the “decadence” of black lower-class forms is a common trope from the slavery period to the present. The diatribe against dancehall, however, has not merely been moored in morality. Dancehall’s distancing from the revolutionary politics of the 1970s and its reflection of the personal melodramas of making it in the marketplace have led some to characterize it as politically conservative. This critique is associated not only with the left-leaning Jamaican intelligentsia but also with sectors of poorer Jamaicans, including prominent Rastafarians. These critics have viewed dancehall as denigrating to black people and, especially, women, and, therefore, as serving the ruling elements in society.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of its adversaries, dancehall has remained the most popular music in Jamaica since the mid-1980s.<sup>30</sup>

The intense privatization drive (one of the largest in the IMF-controlled Third World) that began in the 1980s continued throughout the 1990s, this time led by a newly elected PNP government. The present PNP government is not drawn from either the old or new elite in terms of wealth or social status. Rather, they are black professionals who have advanced mainly through education and not through business. They are a direct product of the expansion of public, and especially university, education in the 1950s and 1960s, which produced a professional upper middle class of brown *and* black civil servants. This cohort of engineers, lawyers, accountants, and managers gained power and position rapidly with the expansion of the state sector during the 1970s. Meanwhile, the majority of the black population, thrown into a globalized marketplace, has largely had to fend for itself. Nevertheless, despite a contracting economy, the PNP government won an unprecedented third term in the 1997 elections. This is due, in part, to the Party’s advocacy of a sort of modified black nationalism. Since 1992, Prime Minister P. J. Patterson—the first phenotypically black prime minister to serve full terms—has advocated a kind of modified black nationalism that has been a significant public challenge to the ideology of creole multiracial nationalism. When Patterson took on the leadership of the PNP in 1991, he made veiled references to the legitimacy of leadership of “me and my kind,” and he has made various attempts throughout his tenure as prime minister to encourage a sense of diaspora.<sup>31</sup> The idea projected here is that “brown” people, whether in the private sector or in national politics, have failed the country and so must step down. The new government’s thrust, therefore, reflects the triumph of the notion that Jamaica is a black country that should be led by black people. This shift toward “blackness” has important implications for the ways black people are positioned in relation to political power, to an older local and expatriate economic elite that maintains

control over Jamaica's significant national resources as well as both daily newspapers, and to an educational system that continues to promote assumptions of creole superiority and black subordination, particularly in the history, social science, and literature curricula. In other words, the modified black nationalism advocated within institutional politics has opened the potential for other popular expressions of black nationalism to become ascendant within the public sphere.

The NDTC's attempt to reflect and, to some extent, respond to these various postcolonial sociopolitical and economic changes within the realm of aesthetics has not always sat well with the concert-going public, though for different reasons at different moments. At their founding, many considered the company to be "too black," but during the 1970s, others who had been politicized by Rasta, reggae, and democratic socialism considered them "not black enough." Nevertheless, the mission of the company has remained constant over the years. That is, the NDTC has been concerned to counter colonial claims that the masses of Jamaica's population are "cultureless," while also eschewing a representation of national belonging that revolves around the axis of race. As such, it offers a counterexample to those who doubted that the various "many" could become a productive and progressive political, social, and cultural unit.<sup>32</sup>

### **Building the Institutional Web/Educating the Public**

The NDTC has not only acted as a catalyst for the development of dance locally but has also provided a model for the establishment of national companies in other Caribbean countries.<sup>33</sup> In Jamaica, founding NDTC members consolidated a wide institutional network for dance activities by the late 1960s. Of utmost significance here are the relationships that were established between performance and education through both the festival movement and the establishment of the Jamaica School of Dance.

#### *The National Festival of the Arts*

For three years prior to the formation of the NDTC, founding company member Joyce Campbell had worked with the Social Development Commission (SDC) on community development through dance. As representatives from the SDC entered communities, they encouraged people to perform regularly during community gatherings in the belief that participation in ring games, quadrilles, and other social dances was not merely an opportunity to validate these rural traditions but also a "productive" way to use leisure time. For Campbell, as for many others on the SDC staff, these experiences marked her first exposure to some of the sacred and secular dance and music forms practiced throughout Jamaica. Campbell included these forms—now called "traditional folk forms"—into the dance competition syllabus for the first National Festival of the Arts in 1962.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, she introduced "Mello-go-Roun'," a showcase for groups performing these rurally based dance and music forms, as a highlight of independence celebrations.<sup>35</sup> As a result of these efforts, the National

Festival of the Arts provided a forum for both competition and exposure to “folk” dance and music for the first time, generating a broader awareness of the customs of Jamaicans across the island.

In 1980, with the establishment of the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, the focus of the national festival was shifted from one of showcasing talent to training people to develop more general skills through their participation in the performing arts. In her post at the Ministry of Education, founding NDTC member Sheila Barnett was responsible for incorporating dance into the physical-education curriculum of Jamaican schools and teacher colleges, thereby extending the influence of the company both to the educational system and to the festival movement, as physical-education teachers were encouraged and trained to enter groups in the dance competitions. With the establishment of the Jamaica School of Dance and the initiation of its Dance in Education programming, these teachers, in turn, were encouraged to attend the school to hone both their teaching and performance skills.

### *The Jamaica School of Dance*

In 1970, the Jamaica School of Dance was opened under the direction of the National Dance Theatre Company,<sup>36</sup> and in 1975 the school was incorporated, along with the schools of music, art, and drama, into the Cultural Training Centre, which opened in 1976. In 1977, the company received funds from the Inter-American Foundation to develop an educational program through the School of Dance from 1977 to 1981 to train “cultural agents,” who would then teach dance and music to children and adolescents throughout the country. This project later developed into one of the two three-year diploma programs offered by the Jamaica School of Dance, the Dance in Education Program.<sup>37</sup> The other diploma program, Dance Theatre and Production, emphasizes professional dance training. In 1983, the Organization of American States (OAS) proposed that the Jamaica School of Dance be a center of training for artists throughout the region. The OAS offered two-year scholarships to practicing artists from other Caribbean countries who lacked the formal teacher training they were then able to receive in Jamaica.<sup>38</sup>

Diplomas in both of these programs are recognized as BA degrees in dance by the Brockport campus of the State University of New York, with whom the school has held an affiliation since the mid-1980s.<sup>39</sup> The Cultural Training Centre became a tertiary institution in 1993, changing its name to the Edna Manley College for the Visual and Performing Arts (EMCVPA) and its organizational affiliation from the Institute of Jamaica to the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Culture. As a tertiary institution, the bulk of faculty salaries and operational costs are paid for by the Jamaican government, which also subsidizes a portion of the students’ tuition.<sup>40</sup> Also in 1993, an association was established with the University of the West Indies whereby the EMCVPA provides 36 of the 90 credits needed for a degree in general arts. The School of Dance leadership was also, in 1996 and 1997, involved in writing CXC exams

in dance for the secondary-school curriculum,<sup>41</sup> as well as degree programs that would be submitted to the University Council of Jamaica.

The Jamaica School of Dance also offers an evening program for those interested in dance on a recreational basis, as well as classes for children between the ages of five and seventeen through a junior department. Additionally, every summer, the school conducts a month-long intensive dance workshop for both full-time and part-time students from Jamaica and abroad. In addition to dance technique classes, the summer workshop highlights panel discussions and ethnographic field trips and culminates in a performance by all participants.

As is evident from the preceding discussion, the founding members of the NDTC had a far-reaching vision to build and sustain a wide—and tight—institutional web that can be summarized in the following manner: With the festival movement, the rurally based dance and music forms associated with various sacred and secular ritual practices were exposed to a national public for the first time. The establishment of the JCDC brought these dances and musical forms into the school system, and schools in particular areas encouraged dancers and musicians practicing these forms to teach them to the children. Through the School of Dance, these forms became a part of the curriculum of what is now a tertiary institution. Graduates then went back into the school system to teach the forms in a systematic way and to use them as important tools within the learning experience. They also incorporated them into dances entered in the festival competitions, which were then judged and evaluated by members of the School of Dance and the NDTC community. And, finally, the NDTC gave, and continues to give, legitimacy to these forms by presenting them under theater conditions and using them as a basis for creative/modern dance choreography.

This institutional web has generated various impressive achievements. Primary among these has been the development of a Caribbean-based movement vocabulary that is both locally and internationally recognized and respected.<sup>42</sup> Related to this has been the company's cultivation of a paying audience within Jamaica for concert dance forms other than ballet. Finally, and most obviously, the company's establishment of institutions that have legitimized "folk" dance as art, and dance generally as integral to national cultural development, must be considered no small task.

With respect to this last point, additional institutional linkages that were established by the NDTC, and especially those with the local media houses, have been critical. Shortly after the company's founding, a relationship was established between the NDTC and the state-owned Jamaica Broadcasting Company (JBC) whereby the government would buy the film stock and the Jamaica Information Service (JIS) would film the company's repertory.<sup>43</sup> These archives are currently held at the Institute of Jamaica, and the JBC has built a library of each NDTC season of dance. In the past, the JBC would also accompany the company on tours abroad. Mediamix and CPTC, privately owned media companies, occasionally broadcast their own footage of the company at their discretion, and other television stations have been given *carte blanche* by the

artistic director to use NDTC footage for public-service announcements in return for free advertisement of the company's performance seasons. The company itself has a video library of its own stored in the media and communications building on the University of the West Indies campus.

Also key to the development of relationships with media houses has been the cultivation of arts critics. Early critics emphasized the company's role as "cultural ambassadors"—both within and outside of Jamaica—who would provide evidence as to the progress of the new nation. In announcing the formation of the NDTC, one commentator wrote that "dance as an art form in Jamaica is now sufficiently developed to be the means of projecting the movement patterns and customs of the island to people locally and abroad" (Lindo 1962). Another, writing a decade later, stated that "the NDTC has done remarkably well for itself, becoming a force in the cultural life of the island and collecting credits on the international scene, doing Jamaica proud" (*Sunday Gleaner* 1972). The NDTC's significance for these writers lay not only in the quality of the dances but in the company's ability to represent Jamaica as a nation with something unique to offer the world: The extent to which the company could represent Jamaica as a society living the ideals of creole multiracial nationalism is an aspect of the NDTC that was not lost on journalists in other West Indian countries. After a tour to Trinidad in 1971, one critic wrote that

the NDTC sharply focused our attention to our own lack of development in dance. . . . Again in Trinidad was a force that told us how far behind we were, even in comparison with our own kind. . . . The NDTC also put Trinidad's development to the test for in the company there are Jamaican whites. Their presence on the team I know held a kind of wonder to many people who have not yet decided whether Trinidadian whites have a place on the National companies we have been planning to establish "in the near future." [*Trinidad Guardian* 1971]

Indeed, by 1972, Jamaican critics were claiming the NDTC as "something which we can call our very own, something of mature excellence, and [something which] through the devotion and sacrifices of all its members, has proved that our considerable talent, when channeled in the right directions, can truly achieve greatness" (Lindo 1972).

### **The National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica: 35 Years Later**

I've seen dance with a particular vision which has not necessarily been shared by everybody around. At the time of independence, the founding members were ready to try to dismantle the old divisions on class and colour lines. They have the loyalty. It's a generational thing too, because we would have come from a generation where we were brought up to serve. Among the greatest achievements you could have in life was service. [Rex Nettleford, author interview, 1996]

By 1997, three relatively distinct generations of performers had entered into the National Dance Theatre Company. These generations' different perceptions of the company's mission, as well as their different experiences



within the company, reflect the broader changes in Jamaica's political economy since independence. Here, I will address the ways newer company members' conceptualizations of belonging to the NDTC has constituted a significant challenge to the company's original emphasis on voluntary participation. I will also discuss how the ascendance of urban popular culture has presented a threat, as it were, to the company's legitimacy as a national representation.

### *On Belonging*

Both older and younger generations of NDTC dancers generally agreed that the mission of the company was (1) to develop an indigenous movement idiom that would reflect the realities of Jamaica's historical development in order that Jamaican and, more widely, Caribbean culture would be positively represented on the international stage through dance, and (2) to use dance in the context of dance theater to help Jamaicans and Caribbean people "understand more about themselves." What was provocative when the different generations of company members spoke about the NDTC's mission, however, was the way they positioned themselves in its development. That is, it was notable that founding company members, and the generation of performers who immediately followed, spoke about the NDTC with a greater sense of ownership than younger members did. When founding members defined the mission of the company, they used the word *we*. For example, one founding member stated the following:

We started out with an idea that we had something to offer to Jamaica in the form of culture, in the form of discipline, in the development of our cultural heritage. And we have tried to keep that, with the modern, folk, and classical. It is there as a model for the Caribbean, and we're probably the only disciplined group that has maintained throughout the years what we set out to do.

Younger company members, on the other hand, referred to "Professor's vision," or to what "they" (the founders) were trying to do. In fact, one younger company member argued that although Nettleford wanted people to understand his mission, he would not allow anyone else to fully own it:

I think that they started off trying to make the classical art form into a Jamaican thing by our movement, a special characterization of our folk. There are things from [the United States] that [Professor Nettleford] has brought here and somehow manipulated and made it ours. And then he's exporting that. past our shores and within our shores, and exporting it from a certain class of people—the artsy set of people—to everybody, the little man in West Kingston. And people from all walks of life do come to it and enjoy it. They don't necessarily understand what's going on, but I'm in half the dances and I don't understand what's going on either. But I think that's really his plan, to get something that is ours and send it back out and say, "See, it's really great."

Second- and third-generation company members also spoke of the founding members as having been a "social set," whereas they saw themselves as

having come from different backgrounds and, as a result, being less cohesive as a group. Though they evoked the class and color distinctions within the NDTC in a characteristically subtle fashion, their comments illuminated the ways society-wide class, color, and cultural hierarchies have persisted despite the company's attempt to transcend them:

The founders, when they started, they were all friends, coming from a certain class background. They were all linked in that particular way. I think now the socioeconomic thing is wider. And I don't think there are very many friends. You will find two people here and there who are good friends, but you get the feeling that were it not for the company, certain people would not even give somebody a second glance.

Here, younger company members were perhaps overstating the uniformity of the class backgrounds of the founding members of the NDTC. It is true that most of the founding women came from urban families that were already middle and upper middle class during the nationalist period. Some of the men, on the other hand, came from more modest rural backgrounds and were often the first in their families who were able to migrate to Kingston and achieve a secondary, and even tertiary, education after the 1948 establishment of the University College of the West Indies (now the University of the West Indies). What united the founding members in terms of background, then, was not so much their socioeconomic status but their sociocultural status. That is, what first-generation black rural migrants like Rex Nettleford and Eddy Thomas shared with the more entrenched middle-class founding members was an appreciation of, and involvement within, formal cultural institutions established during the colonial period (Bourdieu 1984). In other words, although Nettleford's socioeconomic background and his early exposure to rural dance and music traditions may have provided the impetus for the development of a dance company that would elevate the African heritage of the majority of Jamaica's population, his cultural capital enabled him to convince a nationalist intelligentsia that was, at the time, predominantly fair skinned and middle class, to support that endeavor.<sup>44</sup> The commonalities younger dancers attributed to founding company members, therefore, perhaps had more to do with a nostalgia for a sense of cohesiveness, of purpose, they felt they lacked.

Founding company members, on the other hand, tended to position the perceived lack of social cohesion within the NDTC as a result of heightened individualism, and they argued that younger dancers did not understand the company's emphasis on service and were, therefore, less dedicated to its ideals. As one older dancer put it:

Our company was formed by a group of people who had a vision, who wanted to see the dance develop, and they have been loyalists until today. They are very devoted to the company, even if they are not dancing anymore. I don't know if the younger dancers have the kind of dedication we had. Because we were building, remember. They have come into a ready-made situation, which is totally different. They have more expectations than we did. . . . They're coming in when the cake

itself has been baked, and they're eating from it and throwing it away at the same time.

This is a critique that has also been articulated with respect to dancers at the school:

The vision of the graduates of the CTC in the early days was to be cultural agents. When I joined the school, there were a lot of highly motivated people wanting to dance, and we were just figuring out what was possible with dance outside of just wanting to perform, in terms of education and research. Many of the people coming in to do courses at the CTC at the time were mature adults who were already practicing their art form and perhaps hadn't had a lot of formal training. And you were expected to be a practicing artist at your level of proficiency, teach, organize, plan and implement programs, have a good business head; it was a bit much. But it was all within the context of the 1970s and the spirit of the times with socialism and nationalism. After that, the climate of the country changed with the shift away from socialism, and artists were reflective of their times. And we moved away from that social, community consciousness to more of an individual thing.

It is tempting to dismiss the perception that younger dancers are less dedicated as the nostalgia of an older generation. This is too facile an interpretation, however, because newer company members did not, in fact, have to confront the same difficulties as the original NDTC dancers. Further, many of those who entered the company during the 1970s had already been politicized regarding issues of race and class prior to their involvement in the performing arts. As such, they did not need to be convinced of the importance of foregrounding an African cultural heritage in artistic expression. As one female dancer who began performing with the NDTC in the late 1970s explained:

For us, Jamaican dance wasn't something we had to develop; the founders did that. We didn't need to be encouraged to dance to drums, to worry that our families would be scandalized. We had a sense of Africa that they didn't have. We had a sense of the Caribbean, too, that they didn't. But it's a matter of the changes in times. There was a transition in the company when I came in. The whole thing of black power and really feeling like a Jamaican. [One of the female company members] was becoming a Rastafarian. Cheryl Ryman was teaching the history of dance course [at the School of Dance] from a black perspective. The whole thing of dancing for love of country and patriotism was so different for the founders than for us, the next generation. Our generation was a different thing and the economic climate was changing, aside from the difference in thinking generally.

These changes would also prompt younger company members to question some of the principles on which the company was founded, most notably those of the centralized leadership structure and the issue of professionalism. Another female dancer from the late-1970s cohort remarked that when they joined the NDTC, they felt the founders were being "too venerated" and that the younger dancers' needs weren't being taken into account. She explained that they had had several meetings to discuss their concerns, which were generally financial in nature. They had minuted the first meeting and presented it to the

leadership but received no response other than, as she recounted, "Don't ask about the finances of the company. You are just there to dance." Despite these criticisms, or perhaps because of them, other second-generation company members have noticed changes with respect to the treatment of younger dancers. As one noted:

When I came into the company, you had to pay your dues when you joined. No matter how good you were, Professor would always pick the same people that were there before and you'd understand that. But that in itself sort of killed something inside of you. Today it has changed in that I see him actually calling the new kids by their names. It's not as if he never knew our names; he just didn't use them. That's different now. Now company members can stand where they want in class. They even talk back to Professor.

It is clear, then, that younger company members have attempted to redefine "belonging" to the NDTC in ways that would address their concerns, concerns that are related to the changing class composition of the company, as well as the changing climate within Jamaica more generally. It is also clear, as noted above, that the company's leadership has changed their approach in some respects. They have, however, staunchly maintained their position regarding the question of professionalism.

### *On Service and Reciprocity*

The ethos of voluntary participation in the company was originally grounded in the tradition of voluntary individual and community collaboration for the public good that began with the immediate postemancipation establishment of free villages and continued through the work of organizations such as the Social Development Commission. Stated in more practical terms, Jamaica's small economic and population base, as well as the lack of a tradition of public and private funding, left the country incapable of supporting a concert-driven performing-arts industry in which performers could earn a living wage (NDTC 1997; Nettleford 1978:124). Moreover, given the precariousness of patronage in Jamaica's political history, and the fear that public funding along the lines of the Cuban model would have led to a situation in which company members would not have been free to control their own artistic output, the NDTC did not seek whatever financial support might have been available through the government.<sup>45</sup> Finally, and quite aside from these more general concerns, the NDTC was established as a voluntary organization because all of the people who were originally a part of the company were professionals already, and they were either unable or unwilling to give up their primary careers.

Although the NDTC does not pay its dancers a regular wage, company members do receive a per diem stipend when touring, and a few are given access to subsidized housing or scholarships to complete the training programs offered through the School of Dance. The company itself benefits from other types of indirect financial support such as government facilitation of overseas tours, fare reductions offered by Air Jamaica and other carriers, and donated

professional services from doctors, chiropractors, and lawyers. Whatever limited public funds have been available have been directed toward the School of Dance. Founding company members have prioritized the school in this respect because they felt that the investment in dance training would give company members, as well as the general public, skills that would help to promote separate professional careers in teaching, research, and freelance choreography. Professor Nettleford has seen this as the only viable approach. He has not been interested in replicating what he terms “the North American model,” a professional performing-arts industry in which only a small number of successful dancers can expect to live off their work. In the United States, he argued, “for every one that’s working, there are ten who starve” (Rex Nettleford, author interview, 1997).

Despite the logic behind this rationalization of the NDTC’s funding structure, it is also the case that the question of professionalism is not only a generational issue. Arguments within the company regarding the payment of dancers also clearly evoke class differences within the community of performers and the way these differences articulate with gender. Most of the women in the company, throughout its existence, began dancing as children in the various dance studios located in Kingston. The majority of the men who have entered the company as the second and third generations of performers, on the other hand, have been recruited into the School of Dance and the NDTC via their participation in the National Festival of the Arts. Moreover, most of the women in the company either owned their own businesses or are themselves professionals in fields as diverse as graphic design, insurance, and community development, and they were therefore not generally interested in professional careers as performers. The majority of the men did not have additional careers outside of teaching dance.

Two of the male company members spoke frankly about the difficulties they have faced in choosing to dance, linking these difficulties to the ways in which their economic situations are different from the majority of the women in the company. Both these men grew up in what are called “ghetto areas”<sup>46</sup> in downtown Kingston and became involved with the NDTC via their participation in the festival movement with local community groups. Since joining the company, they’ve both supported themselves by teaching dance at various primary schools and organizing groups to perform in the National Festival, but they find it very difficult to survive in this manner:

Listen, all the boys that pass through the company, what they do? What sort of profession they have outside of that? Dancing is their livelihood. Even if they’re teaching, dancing is their livelihood. The females don’t really think about it because for them, it’s like a recreational thing. They have their businesses or their professions. But I always say, woman, not knocking you or anything like that, but woman, they can always find a rich husband and married in money, which is what happen to the majority. I don’t say that that’s what they set out to do, but that’s what happened to the majority of the ladies that are in the company now. So certain things don’t really matter to them. They don’t have to worry about a dinner, money to go to doctor, or something like that. But if a company has been around so long,

I don't think that this should still be happening. I think we should have health insurance, and I think we should get paid for dancing.

This commentary brings to light several processes. The establishment of institutional structures—such as the festival movement and the Jamaica School of Dance—has opened participation in the performing arts to a wider range of individuals than had been the case previously. And by corollary, the entrance of people from less privileged class backgrounds into entities like the NDTC has facilitated the emergence of an internal challenge to the values of service and voluntarism on which the company was founded.

That these challenges have been articulated most forcefully by *men* from poorer backgrounds is also not insignificant. Though several women have reportedly sympathized with the men's objections to the ethos of voluntary participation, it is also true that the company's female members throughout the years have had (and have been encouraged to have) other means by which to support themselves. Their involvement in the performing arts, then, has primarily been a labor of love—a "hobby" into which they were socialized from their youth. For the men of this generation, on the other hand, performing in the national company is as much a "way out" of the ghetto as it is a way to express their love for dancing. However, this is a way out that generates social, more than economic, capital. Although it is possible to make a living by performing, concert dance is not the venue. Rather, dancers interested in supporting themselves financially must be willing to perform in cabaret shows in the tourist resorts on the north coast. The issue here, as one of the male dancers explained, is that this type of performance does not offer the same degree of variety as does dancing with a company in Kingston. Neither does it provide the same opportunity for travel, nor the level of prestige associated with the NDTC. Because it is so difficult to make a living through concert dance, many male company members who want to perform professionally must migrate. Furthermore, there exists a perception that if you are male and a dancer you must be gay. Because homophobia in Jamaica is often manifested violently, this perception may also lead male dancers to try their luck abroad. A few of the male dancers have been successful in this pursuit, performing in the United States and England, and often with companies that have been established by former NDTC dancers such as Garth Fagan (in Rochester, New York) or Jackie Guy (in Birmingham, England).<sup>47</sup>

The challenges issued by younger company members, therefore, call into question the extent to which nationalist cultural institutions like the NDTC have been able to transcend class and color differences, differences that also articulate with gender and sexuality. Younger dancers have demanded a kind of reciprocity from the company that founding members, because of their own initial resource bases, had not previously envisioned. At the same time, as aesthetic expectations for nationalist representations have changed in the last 15 years, the NDTC's capacity to legitimately represent Jamaica's identity

through dance and, by extension, to stand as an example of a more general national cultural ethos, has been problematized.

### *On Blackness*

Although the NDTC stylistically and institutionally set the pace for all the other companies, and although the company's early incorporation of reggae music and Rastafarian themes have been cited as proof of its willingness to be accountable and relevant to a wider Jamaican audience, the NDTC's inclusion of dancehall idioms into its repertory has been relatively late ("Bujurama," Nettleford's first work using dancehall music and presenting a dancehall nightclub scene, was choreographed for the 1996 season). Furthermore, though the company has emphasized the development of a distinctly Caribbean movement vocabulary, this vocabulary has generally been presented within choreographic structures and venues associated with "high" culture. More recently established companies—in particular, L'ACADCO<sup>48</sup>—have made greater use of urban popular dance and music forms (especially dancehall). They often perform in contexts associated with popular music (like *Reggae Sunsplash*) and assert that dancers should be paid. These companies have further broadened the audience for concert dance in Jamaica and have arguably made the boundaries between "high" culture (what one might pay to see in the Little Theatre, Kingston's premiere concert dance venue) and popular culture (what one might experience in a dancehall session) more permeable. They also reflect the growing influence of the ideology that youth should benefit economically from exploiting their culture.<sup>49</sup>

The NDTC's democratization of dance, therefore, has opened the company to significant challenges regarding its ability to adequately represent the nation in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Internally, as subsequent generations of performers have entered the company, some of the principles on which the NDTC was founded—especially those of service and voluntary participation—have been explicitly interrogated. Moreover, the establishment of new dance companies that have broadened the NDTC's emphasis on a rural Jamaican "folk" culture by highlighting popular dance and music forms associated with the black lower classes has called into question the NDTC's status as the paramount (and most relevant) national cultural representation. Additionally, and, perhaps, relatedly, in spite of the impressive achievements with respect to institutional growth that have occurred as a result of the NDTC founding members' efforts, it is also the case that these institutions have encountered various setbacks. For example, enrollment at the School of Dance has declined significantly over the past ten years. The dean of the performing arts of the EMCVPA and the director of the School of Dance explain this trend primarily as the result of the lack of a professional performing-arts industry in Jamaica, but also as the result of a public unwillingness to recognize the legitimacy of other career avenues in dance either through education or cultural tourism. Finally, because issues of blackness and authenticity are inextricably linked to issues of sexuality and class, one could indeed ask whether the medium of

concert dance—itself gendered—has the capacity to galvanize the masses around a sense of national identity, given the intensely policed emphasis on heterosexual masculinity in Jamaica.<sup>50</sup>

Despite these issues, because of the NDTC's centrality within the national institutional web encompassing the performing arts in Jamaica as well as the significant and influential social networks maintained by founding company members, because the NDTC generates more in cash and in-kind contributions than any other group, and because the NDTC still carries a level of prestige for young dancers that other companies do not, the company has retained its status, at least symbolically, as the premiere national dance company in Jamaica. As long as Professor Nettleford serves in the capacity of artistic director, and while founding members continue to participate in significant ways in shaping the company's vision, this will most likely remain the case. Indeed, the most significant transitional period within the NDTC may occur when the founding generation ceases to be involved.

### **Institutional Transformation and Hegemonic Re-Ordering: Toward a Conclusion**

Although the overarching goal of the anticolonial movement in Jamaica was independence from British domination, the ideal of Jamaican creole multi-racial nationalism was to widen democracy in the most literal sense of the word—that is, to increase the ability of the broadest mass of the population to realize their own potential for self-determination as citizens rather than subjects.<sup>51</sup> This “democratic widening” now poses a potential challenge to the legitimacy of the institutions that had been established (or co-opted) by the nationalist elite, a challenge similar to the one that they themselves had posed to colonial cultural supremacy. As previously noted, this is because the nationalist elite was itself involved in reproducing internal inequalities once political independence had been achieved. If the transcendent unity envisioned by creole multiracial nationalism has not, 40 years later, fundamentally altered colonial color, class, and cultural hierarchies, what does this imply for the cultural institutions built by the nationalist intelligentsia?

A focus on institutions helps us to specify the processes by which, and contexts within which, power relations are both produced and transformed because, as we know, power is not possessed, it is exercised.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, grounding the changing political economy of institutions over time in historical context allows us to see institutional transformations as signs of broader hegemonic shifts. Indeed, Sherry Ortner's revision of practice theory reminds us that structure itself is not a totalized hypercoherent object, and it encourages a view in which everything is “slightly—but not completely—tilted toward incompleteness, instability, and change” (1996:18). This perspective enables us to avoid the loop whereby structures construct subjects and practices such that subjects and practices reproduce structures. Instead, we are able to give more weight to moments of creativity and transformation in our explorations of changes in the specifics of national, racial, classed, and gendered inequalities



over time. Indeed, these very inequalities constitute some of the nodes of articulation for the reproduction and transformation of structures and practices. That is, attention to the dynamism of context requires that we locate and ethnographically ground changes in the meanings—structural, ideological, experiential—of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, and nation.

In the case I have outlined here, we are seeing two moments of institutional transformation in Jamaica: the first from the period of Crown Colony rule to independence and the second from independence to the late 20th century. The former placed emphasis on the “folk,” on defining what was indigenous, understanding that these “folk” forms also manifested Jamaica’s African heritage. Nationalist cultural mobilizers hoped that this reconstituted past, in publicly recognizing the contributions of Africans and their descendants to the historical and cultural development of the Jamaican nation, would provide moral codes for its future. As a result, their efforts were also, at least in part, geared toward reforming working-class culture.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, nationalists distanced themselves both from the perceived “backwardness” of Africa and from the rural and urban proletariat whose practices—and values—were seen as disruptive to a modern social order over which middle-class professionals would preside. Within the context of anticolonial struggle, their assertion of an equal and legitimate cultural heritage was designed to prove Jamaica’s political and cultural maturity. By developing institutions that would increase Jamaicans’ access to the performing arts, they were also attempting to socialize the population simultaneously into a particular vision of their own cultural distinctiveness and into the values of service and voluntarism considered crucial for the building of the new nation.

The second moment of institutional transformation, from independence to the present, reflects a vastly different political, economic, and ideological context and places emphasis on popular urban lower-class cultural productions. Africa, here, is almost absent, and blackness is the most common signifier. These transitions within concert dance in Jamaica are representative of a more general generational shift whereby popular urban cultural forms have emerged as paramount within the public sphere of national representations. Over the past ten years, the cultural forms and political and economic trends of lower-class black Jamaicans have gained new legitimacy and proliferated publicly, sometimes reproducing, but often challenging, hegemonic values and institutional arrangements (Stolzhoff 2000; Ulysse 1999). Several analysts of Jamaican society have documented the political and economic shifts that have underpinned a greater economic and cultural autonomy for many lower-class Jamaicans despite a more general economic contraction since 1989 (see esp. Robotham 1998). These shifts have generated what Brian Meeks (1994) has called a “hegemonic dissolution,” what David Scott has identified as a “profound crisis” of the “postcolonial nationalist-modern” (1999:190), and what I have elsewhere (Thomas 2000) noted as the ascendancy, in the public sphere, of racialized visions of citizenship culturally buttressed by “modern blackness.”

These shifts have also occasioned intense and sometimes moralistic debates—both popularly and within academic arenas—centering around the repercussions of racialized cultural assertions for a liberal-humanist nationalism (Carnegie 1996), the question of whether alternative unifying frameworks have as yet been articulated by black lower-class Jamaicans (Meeks 1994), and what has been viewed as the intensification of individualism and materialism. What is at stake in these debates is the integrity of the postcolonial nation during a period of intense disillusionment with the nationalist state. Indeed, the new context of late-20th-century globalization has diminished the power of individual states—and some states more than others—to socialize and provide for their citizens. In many postcolonial countries, more recent privatization policies have come on the heels of constraints encouraged through the development agendas of international agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF. The “crisis,” then, has to do with the viability not only of nationalist cultural institutions that were established during the anticolonial period but of the state itself. Is there a way, however, to interpret these transformations as constituting something other than a crisis?

Although it is true that current processes of globalization have widened income gaps, intensified racialized and spatialized hierarchies internationally, and increased the insecurity and marginalization of the most disadvantaged groups in the labor market, it is also the case that the new global political economy has opened other avenues for survival and even advancement.<sup>54</sup> Although the current context of global capitalism leaves little room for “counter” anything, it has also generated new avenues through which many lower-class Jamaicans are advancing their economic ambitions and elaborating alternative cultural frameworks. Within the context of intensified transnational migration, they are increasingly able to circumvent local middle- and upper-class Jamaicans on whom, as political and economic brokers, they were previously more dependent. Moreover, an amplified racialized diasporic consciousness has enabled lower-class Jamaicans to publicly challenge the creole nationalist view of “folk” blackness and therefore subvert the ideologies of those who in the past few decades have had immediate power over their lives. In other words, the current context has opened a space in which aspects of colonial class/color/cultural hierarchies that had been reproduced by the nationalist elite are being challenged—and sometimes eschewed.<sup>55</sup> I am not suggesting that some wholesale and romantic transformation has occurred in Jamaica whereby the urban lower classes have valiantly thrown off the yokes of both colonial domination and foreign capitalist domination in order to globally assert newly powerful socioeconomic, political, and cultural identities. The ways poverty and violence continue to constrain avenues for advancement locally are still the main issues preoccupying lower-class—and, indeed, all—Jamaicans. Nor am I attempting to claim that institutional democratization ultimately renders postcolonial institutions illegitimate. Nor am I arguing that it is not still crucial to exert pressures on nationalist institutions—indeed on states themselves—to continue to democratize content and increase access. What I *am* proposing is

that within a changing global political economy of culture and race, perceptual shifts regarding the legitimacy of certain institutions mirror the changing balance of power and inequality within postcolonial states.

What is key in pulling the analysis of postcolonial hegemonic shifts in Jamaica out of a crisis-oriented discourse, therefore, is attention to the larger political, economic, and ideological contexts in which these shifts have occurred. What the Jamaican case points to is that the context of anticolonial nationalism facilitates a hegemonic reorientation toward the nationalist state as the guarantor of increased democratic participation in all aspects of society and as the symbol around which pride is mobilized. This is rooted in the late-19th-century ideology that sovereign nations should have not only territorial but also cultural borders, that states are the most modern form of social organization, and that progress is marked by the extent to which an engaged citizenry voluntarily participates in a state's institutional structures. The context of globalization, on the other hand, orients citizens away from the nationalist state and toward other avenues for individual, family/household, and community development. Modernity is marked through urban cosmopolitanism, citizenship has come to be experienced transnationally, and progress is defined as the generation of wealth. Concurrently, publicly hegemonic ideologies regarding national cultural belonging have also shifted. In Jamaica, the creole multiracial harmony of mid-20th-century nationalists was upstaged, during the 1990s, by an unapologetic blackness. Urban sound-system dances have stolen the limelight from rural Jamaicans' "folk forms" as Jamaican bodies—still racialized, still classed, still gendered—attempt to keep in step with global time.

## Notes

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1. National citizenries, it has been shown, were created through such means as the codification of language, the standardization of culture, the establishment of civil society, and the writing of official histories. These are processes of state formation that also involved an inculcation of beliefs, value systems, and conventions of behavior in support of the goals of establishing social cohesion and legitimating institutions and relations of authority (Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Hobsbawm 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Nagengast 1994).

2. Although my focus here is on dance, dance is only part of an expressive cultural mix that exists throughout the African diaspora; as several scholars have argued, that mix constitutes a privileged site—an “alternative public sphere” (Gilroy 1991:215)—through which to read black Atlantic political, economic, social, and cultural ideologies (see Abrahams 1983; Gilroy 1993; Levine 1977).

3. The ethnographic research for this article was conducted in 1996 and 1997. As a professional dancer myself, I used dance as a point of entry into a broader multisited research project designed to explore the social world of Jamaican cultural politics. The analysis presented here is based on my work with members of the artistic community—performers, teachers, administrators, and policy makers. With these individuals, I participated in classes, observed rehearsals and performances, and conducted interviews. These interviews, over 100 in total, generally varied in length from two to six hours. However, those conducted with Rex Nettleford (artistic director of the NDTC), L’Antoinette Stines (artistic director of L’ACADCO), and Barbara Requa (founding member of NDTC, dean of the performing arts at Edna Manley College for the Visual and Performing Arts) were much longer and more extensive, conducted as they were in segments over the one-and-a-half years of my fieldwork. The interviews addressed subjects’ participation in the arts, their understanding of the mission statements of the various organizations with which they worked, their assessments of the impact of expressive cultural action in terms of helping to define a cultural identity, and their views with respect to the ways in which Jamaica has changed since independence. Additionally, I served, by request, as an adjudicator for the parish and national finals of the National Festival of the Arts, organized by the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC), and attended a conference in December 1996 that was held to revise Jamaica’s cultural policy. Finally, I followed the debates and activities surrounding a committee that was established, also in 1996, to reevaluate the nation’s symbols and observances. To comprehend the significance of these various state-led initiatives geared toward defining Jamaican cultural identity to those not directly involved, I also conducted more traditional participant-observation fieldwork in the rural hillside community of St. Andrew, just outside Jamaica’s capital city, but the analysis that follows draws from my work among the artistic community. This analysis is based on the composition of the company during my fieldwork. Of course, since then, new members have joined and older members have stopped dancing, but I don’t consider the effects of these changes here.

4. Elsewhere (Thomas 2000), I document in much greater detail the various kinds of cultural institutions that were established in Jamaica throughout the period between Crown Colony rule and independence.

5. Marcus Garvey is usually characterized as a black nationalist whose cultural vision was nevertheless rooted in Eurocentric ideas regarding “civilization” and “high culture.” Although this is true in many ways, there were also aspects of Garvey’s cultural politics that encouraged the growth of an “indigenous” aesthetic, albeit one significantly shaped by the diasporic circulations of black people in the Americas. Indeed, Garvey envisioned a locally rooted aesthetic as an integral part of the assertion of black nationalism.

His newspaper and the organ of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the *Negro World*, encouraged the development of creative expression, and particularly that of a literary bent. Garvey believed that in order to subvert their oppression, black people needed to develop their own cultural norms and aesthetics for literature, music, dance, and visual art, and that black artists had a duty to create works that were uplifting. By the time Garvey returned to Jamaica from the United States in 1927, he had also come to argue that the state should support local artistic activity. Part of his 1930 election platform, therefore, was the establishment of a national performing-arts center. Having lost the election, Garvey founded the Edelweiss Park Amusement Company in 1931, through which he showcased dramatic presentations, musical revues, vaudeville shows, comedies, films, fairs, and elocution, singing, and dancing contests. Edelweiss Park also became the home base for a dance troupe called the Follies. Under the direction of Geraldo Leon, who had spent years performing in cabaret shows and musical revues in New York City, Cuba, Belize, and Paris, the Follies performed a varied repertoire of Broadway-inspired compositions as well as presentations of Jamaican folk music and dance (Hamilton 1994).

6. Prior to his work in the UNIA, Garvey had been an assistant secretary for the National Club, Jamaica's first nationalist organization, which was founded in 1906 by Robert Love and Sandy Cox. The National Club movement died when Cox migrated to the United States in 1912. As is well known, Garvey also subsequently migrated to the United States, where he established the UNIA in New York City. When Garvey was deported from the United States, in 1927, he established the UNIA in Jamaica; in 1928, he launched the People's Political Party and the Jamaica Workers' and Labourers' Association. Though Garvey failed to win a seat in the Legislative Council in the 1930 elections, between 1927 and 1935 (the year he exiled himself to London), the black-nationalist leader organized support for an electoral manifesto that embraced self-government, the protection of labor through minimum-wage legislation and land reform, and the establishment of institutions of higher education and training. The UNIA, viewed by some as primarily racist rather than nationalist (Hart 1970), laid the foundation in Jamaica and worldwide for self-respect and organized nationalism among both the working and middle classes. Indeed, Garvey's following among upper- and middle-class small businessmen was due, in part, to their efforts to protect and expand the stake of black and brown Jamaicans in the island's businesses in the face of increasing competition from Chinese and Middle Eastern immigrants.

7. Indeed, the invasion of Ethiopia galvanized black-nationalist sentiment among all but the upper class and the top stratum of the middle class, bringing especially middle-class Jamaicans to a new ideological interpretation of Jamaica's poverty. The Ethiopian crisis, however, would also split nationalist tendencies. Some Jamaicans, influenced by Garvey's prophecy that a black king would be crowned in Africa, as well as by their experiences with racism as migrants in the United States, Panama, and Costa Rica, developed the religious/sociopolitical movement of Rastafari. Others among the middle-class and small landholders withdrew from Ethiopianism because of its anti-British tendencies. The nationalism that emerged among the latter, though influenced by racially based black nationalism, was framed in terms of Westminster constitutionalism. For more on the impact of Mussolini's invasion see Post 1978.

8. Elsewhere (Thomas in press), I delineate more thoroughly the diversity within Jamaica's nationalist movement up to 1962. Here, I merely want to note that the reformist tendency represented (in different ways) by both the post-1952 People's National Party and the Jamaica Labour Party ultimately became hegemonic by the time of Jamaica's

independence in 1962, despite the emergence of alternative perspectives and programs and despite the manifestation of the working classes as a political force during the West Indies-wide labor riots of the late 1930s.

9. The mission of the Ivy Baxter Creative Dance Group was “to develop a dance idiom which would suitably and adequately give artistic expression in keeping with life and culture in the Caribbean, and further, to work wherever possible with other West Indian groups engaged in similar activities” (Baxter 1970:305).

10. These workshops sponsored the participation of teachers and performers such as Beryl McBurnie from Trinidad, Lavinia Williams and Jean-Léon Destiné from Haiti, and Eryck Darling and Neville Black, Jamaicans who had trained in the United States with the Limón and Graham companies.

11. No one involved in the company is paid directly.

12. These include “African Scenario” (1962, chor. Rex Nettleford), “Legend of Lover’s Leap” (1962, Eddy Thomas), “Pocomania” (1963, Rex Nettleford), “Plantation Revelry” (1963, Rex Nettleford), “Country Wedding” (1964, Eddy Thomas), “Two Drums for Babylon” (1964, Rex Nettleford), “Parade Kingston 13” (1965, Eddy Thomas), “Kas Kas” (1965, Rex Nettleford), “Jamaica Promenade” (1966, Eddy Thomas), “Night Shelter” (1967, Neville Black), and “Folkform” (1968, Rex Nettleford).

13. Several of the original NDTC male company members had trained at the Martha Graham school in New York City.

14. Later choreography in this vein includes “Kumina” (1971), “Myal” (1974), “Tribute to Cliff” (1974), “Court of Jah” (1975), “Ni—Woman of Destiny” (1976, chor. Sheila Barnett), “Sulkari” (1980, chor. Eduardo Rivero), and “Gerrehbenta” (1983). All pieces were choreographed by Rex Nettleford unless otherwise noted.

15. More recent choreography by Arlene Richards (especially “Voices” [1997]) has foregrounded images of protest and injustice without necessarily presenting a resolution of the issues being protested.

16. This portrayal reproduces (or actually, presages) some of the more problematic assertions within Peter Wilson’s respectability/reputation binary (Wilson 1973).

17. The Henry Rebellion was an attempt just prior to independence to organize an armed rebellion against both the colonial and the impending nationalist Jamaican governments and security forces with the goal of establishing a black government in Jamaica and, ultimately, of repatriation to Africa. In 1960, police raided Henry’s headquarters and seized over five thousand detonators, several sticks of dynamite, 12-bore cartridges, a shotgun, a revolver, and swords, clubs, batons and a spear, together with a letter to Fidel Castro asking for advice and assistance (Chevannes 1976). Henry and 12 of his followers were charged on four counts of intent and conspiracy to “subvert, overawe, and intimidate the Government of Jamaica” (Chevannes 1976:277). Henry also had a base in the Red Hills area outside of Kingston where his son Ronald and several African American recruits trained and stored ammunition. After raiding Henry’s headquarters, the police also searched the camp in Red Hills. During that operation, a skirmish ensued and two British soldiers were killed. Ronald Henry and four others were subsequently found guilty not only of subversion but also of the murder of the British soldiers. Coming on the eve of independence, this incident galvanized middle-class Jamaicans’ fear of Rastafarians. Now viewed not only as “uncivilized” or “unclean” but also as hostile to the state and its ideology of creole multiracial nationalism, Rastafarians experienced significant and randomly executed repression at the hands of the security forces throughout the 1960s. The backlash against Rastafarians after the Henry Rebellion led not only to

their requesting the university to undertake a systematic study of their way of life and worldviews in order to provide legitimacy for their beliefs (Nettleford et al. 1961) but also to their distancing themselves from the violence of Henry's group. For more extensive discussions of the Henry Rebellion, its articulation with the goal of repatriation, and its connections to both Jamaicans and African Americans in New York City see Chevannes 1976 and Meeks 2000. Terry Lacey (1977) also devotes a chapter to the Henry Rebellion in his discussion of violence and politics in Jamaica during the 1960s, as does Obika Gray (1991).

18. In 1960, Millard Johnson, who had been a founding member of the Marxist-oriented People's Freedom Movement, reprised Garvey's People's Political Party (PPP) to contest the 1962 elections. As a former president of the Afro-West Indian Society, Johnson was a Garveyite but not a Rastafarian. Rather, he reflected the aspirations of the black middle and entrepreneurial classes at the time of independence (Lewis 1994). By June 1961, the PPP had launched an antifederation campaign. Also part of its platform were the need for cultural ties with Africa, a reduction of foreign capital's dominance in the economy, assistance to small businesses, and an end to racial discrimination in employment (Gray 1991:60). Though annihilated in the elections, the PPP showed—in its ability to organize meetings attended by six thousand to seven thousand people—that “racial politics were strongly ingrained in the Jamaican people, and that, given a little organization and leadership, a mass following could quickly be assembled for a movement appealing specifically to black Jamaicans” (Lacey 1977:55).

19. On April 22, 1963, six Rastafarians attacked a Shell gas station in Coral Gardens outside of Jamaica's “second city,” Montego Bay. A party of police and civilians pursued the men, and ultimately, eight people were killed. The three surviving Rastafarians were subsequently hanged. It was not known what the motives for the incident were—some have opined that it signaled a Rasta uprising, others that it was the result of land scarcity in the rural areas—but it raised many questions regarding police effectiveness and the impromptu use of armed civilians in security operations. The incident triggered a mass repression of Rastas in Jamaica. The anti-Chinese disturbances during August and September of 1965 were sparked by a violent fight between a black Jamaican shop worker and the shop's Chinese proprietors. These disturbances brought commercial life in Kingston to a standstill for a day, paralyzed the bus services, necessitated the mobilization of the Police Riot Squad, and occupied both the police and the fire brigade in the Kingston and St. Andrew metropolitan area for days. For a fuller discussion of these and other incidents during the 1960s, as well as of the Jamaican state's response, see Lacey 1977.

20. In 1968, the Jamaican government banned Walter Rodney, the Guyanese Marxist historian and activist, from reentering Jamaica after attending a conference abroad. This was part of an attempt to stem the influence of intellectuals at the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies who were articulating an increasingly politicized racial identity complemented by an espousal of a more left-leaning, pan-Caribbean, anti-imperial vision. Students and community leaders alike took to the streets to protest the government's action, and a number of North American properties—symbols of foreign penetration and growing economic dislocation among poorer Jamaicans—were attacked, burned, and looted as protests turned to riots. Though the students and community groups involved suffered violent reprisals by the police and the army, the incident demonstrated that the urban poor were sufficiently mobilized to seize the opportunity offered by the student demonstration to take over the commercial quarter of Kingston for half a day, pointing to a source of political strength outside and beyond the control of the

conventional political system (Lacey 1977). In the wake of these riots, an alliance of intellectuals and grassroots leaders came together under the umbrella of the Abeng movement.

21. For a detailed analysis of the Rude Boy phenomenon and its significance for Jamaican politics see Gray 1991.

22. Indeed, political scientist and celebrated pollster Carl Stone conducted a survey in 1971 that was designed to glean the extent of support for the new political structures and dominant ideologies of nationhood across class sectors. Stone reported that the two polarized views of Jamaican nationalism—multiracialism and a conception of national belonging that centered around racial community/solidarity—correlated not only to class (with the upper and middle classes, as well as the upward-aspiring working classes, supporting multiracialism and the lower classes rejecting it), but also to employment. That is, support of multiracialism declined with employment in *each* class stratum, with the chronically unemployed being the most hostile to the political parties, to the ideology of multiracialism, and to whites and other ethnic minorities within Jamaica (see esp. Stone 1973:147, table 9.6). Additionally, Stone (1973:106, 123) reported that support for Black Power and Rastafarian ideologies not only correlated with class but with skin color within class strata.

23. See Stephens and Stephens 1986 for a more detailed description of Manley's policies.

24. Because the models of revolutionary citizenship of the 1960s were overwhelmingly masculinist, Manley's attention during the 1970s to feminist mobilization was critical.

25. Although large-scale emigration of ethnic minorities wary of Manley's democratic-socialist policies contributed to the steady economic decline throughout the 1970s, it also created unanticipated and unexpected openings for some black Jamaicans to enter the entrepreneurial class as well as the middle and upper levels of private-sector management. Big corporate enterprises, however, remained in the hands of those members of the ethnic minorities who stayed in Jamaica during the 1970s and who were less affected by the economic downturn than smaller enterprises. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, they began a process of consolidation and concentration of ownership that would continue through the 1990s. Nevertheless, widening employment opportunities in the private sector motivated many gifted, highly trained, and experienced black Jamaicans to abandon public-sector careers in favor of more lucrative private-sector employment, and blacks emerged to occupy 40 to 50 percent of top- and middle-level private-sector technical and managerial jobs (Stone 1991:254). Despite consistent national economic decline, then, the 1970s witnessed some of the most far-reaching changes in Jamaica's ethnic economic division of labor. Increases in both import trading (*higglering*) and the illegal drug trade placed significant wealth in the hands of some lower-class black Jamaicans, while middle-class black Jamaicans became established within the corporate managerial elite. At the same time, black entrepreneurship got a foothold in part because of the PNP's nationalization of Barclay's Bank, which, as the National Commercial Bank, became an aggressive lender to small- and medium-sized ventures. As a result, by the end of the 1970s, ethnic minorities no longer dominated the ownership of medium-scale and smaller manufacturing and commercial enterprises.

26. There is extensive debate as to whether the CIA was indeed involved in destabilizing Manley's PNP government. Stephens and Stephens (1986) suggest that evidence supporting this claim is inconclusive. Bolles (1996), however, reports former CIA operative Phillip Agee as having confirmed that the United States made deliberate



attempts to undermine democratic socialism. What is important here is that locally, Jamaicans *believe* that the CIA did, in fact, play a role in ousting Manley. This is a belief that is commonly held across class, race, and gender divides, and it has contributed to anti-American sentiment among the population.

27. Of course, black businesses were not the only interests that were adversely affected by Seaga's policies, but, as Carl Stone (1991:257) points out, "because many had recently come into business, had borrowed heavily to make this move, and were operating in very vulnerable sectors, the effect was greater on black businessmen as a whole than on the other ethnic groups owning enterprises."

28. Higglers are petty traders, usually women, who buy bulk and sell small. Originally rural women who traveled to Kingston to sell produce in city markets, higglers are now jet-setters, buying goods in the United States and elsewhere throughout the Caribbean to bring back to their clientele in Jamaica. For more on the expansion of the informal economic sector and these women's roles within it see Harrison 1988 and Ulysse 1999.

29. Although several organizations have taken a public stance against the explicit misogyny and homophobia that characterize some dancehall lyrics, some scholars have viewed the cultural space of dancehall as facilitating a form of female liberation. Carolyn Cooper, a Jamaican literary critic, has argued that dancehall is a kind of "verbal maronage" (Cooper 1989:12) through which singers critique the conservatism of Jamaican social relations. Similarly, Gina Ulysse's (1999) ethnographic research among Informal Commercial Importers in Kingston suggests that dancehall has provided a forum through which lower-class Jamaican women have been able to redefine their public image on their own terms. Ethnomusicologist Ken Bilby's (1995) view is that dancehall discourse simply rehearses ideologies espoused more generally within Jamaican society. Bilby also ties dancehall's language—both literally and figuratively—to a move toward increased local cultural autonomy among the black lower classes. What these kinds of assessments flag is the need to analyze dancehall within a historical framework that links popular cultural representations of gender and sexuality to the continuities and changes within more general societal norms.

30. There has been, in recent years, a "roots and culture" revival within dancehall, suggesting that sustained public criticism of "slackness" has taken its toll (see, e.g., Whyte 1997). Andrew Ross (1998) sees this as the result of uncertainties regarding global economic integration. That is, within the context of neocolonialism, strains of nationalism have resurged within musical culture through a revisiting of Rasta philosophy. Additionally, because a transnational Jamaican American culture has developed over the past 15 years resulting in a fusion of reggae and hip hop, "roots" reggae appeals to those seeking a more "purely" Jamaican sound. Not insignificantly, Ross also argues that the generational cohort increasingly responsible for managing the state and the media is one that grew up with reggae music during the 1970s and is therefore more attracted to the "conscious-lyrics" stance against corruption and injustice. Still, because this revival of conscious lyrics has occurred within the context of a "neocolonial IMF order," Ross does not view it as representing a revolutionary vision demanding equal rights and justice.

31. In 1997, for example, Patterson urged African Americans to invest in Jamaica. He also encouraged Jamaicans abroad to fully participate in political and civic activities in their adopted countries in order to capitalize on their numbers, noting that Jamaica's constitution entitles Jamaicans to claim Jamaican citizenship regardless of prevailing regulations in adopted countries (*Daily Gleaner* 1997a, 1997b).

32. Given the dominance of Parsonian integrationist frameworks at the time, questions as to whether democratic government could function in racially mixed societies were paramount and most clearly evident within the debate between M. G. Smith (1955, 1960, 1965), who argued that West Indian societies are characterized by the differential incorporation of various cultural groups, each with different institutional structures, into a hierarchical plurality that is structural and held together only by political domination (M. G. Smith 1955, 1960, 1965), and R. T. Smith (1967, 1995), who used a class-stratification model to argue that West Indian societies were integrated and stabilized around a ranking system based on a general acceptance of the superiority of “things English,” (1967, 1995; cf. Braithwaite 1953).

33. The Barbados Dance Theatre Company and Guyana’s national school and company have both drawn inspiration from the NDTC. Moreover, company principals and choreographers have taught dance in Grenada, Dominica, Antigua, Montserrat, Barbados, the Cayman Islands, and Trinidad. Other company members have also taught throughout Jamaica and have participated as judges for the Jamaica National Festival of the Performing Arts, as well as for dance festivals in Belize and the Bahamas, among other places.

34. Though the first all-island arts festival had been held in 1955—ironically to celebrate Jamaica’s tercentenary, three hundred years of colonial rule—the festival in 1962 was the first one planned under the auspices of the Ministry of Development and Welfare, which ultimately set up a festival commission for future years. Campbell cowrote the dance syllabus with Rex Nettleford, who was then the chairman of the dance committee for the festival office.

35. There has since been some discussion of whether the traditional groups should present their material within a competitive rather than expository context. In 1997, there were small regional festival finals for Mento Yard, and some folk groups were featured during the independence show, but the bulk of the traditional presentations were moved to Heritage Week in October. Additionally, there are fewer adult groups performing the folk forms now than previously, partially as a result of the higher economic cost of maintaining the integrity of the rituals without JCDC sponsorship and also because a number of the leaders have died. The African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica’s Memory Bank project has made a point of documenting these performances on video as well as interviewing the participants.

36. For the NDTC’s first five years, the Eddy Thomas Dance Workshop acted as an unofficial training arm of the NDTC. However, when Thomas left the company in 1968, the company needed a new feeder source where dancers would be trained in the movement vocabulary the dancers had been evolving. At that time, founding NDTC members Sheila Barnett and Barbara Requa had been operating a school called the Contemporary Dance Center that offered training for children and adults, as well as a teachers’ program. Bert Rose, another founding company member, had also opened a small studio, and in 1970, the two schools joined together under the direction of the National Dance Theatre Company to become the Jamaica School of Dance.

37. Accredited by the Joint Boards of Teacher Education, this program trains teachers and organizers to teach dance in schools around Jamaica. Students are required to do the same coursework as they would in one of the Jamaican teacher-training colleges and, in addition, to learn and master modern as well as Caribbean dance techniques.

38. In 1997, I was able to assemble information regarding 67 of the 75 graduates of the two Jamaica School of Dance diploma programs. The majority of these graduates have had careers in dance, though very few as professional performers. Graduates have

taught in primary and secondary schools within Jamaica, established their own dance studios or performance groups in Kingston or in the rural areas, or continued their training and/or education in the United States, England, or Canada. Those students from other Caribbean islands who came to Jamaica on OAS fellowships most commonly returned home and taught in schools, worked as cultural officers within their Ministries of Education, or established cultural centers. About half of the total graduates from the school's programs have since migrated, and of these, only a handful have stopped their involvement with dance altogether.

39. This affiliation was spearheaded by the school in conjunction with Clyde Morgan, a Brockport-campus SUNY instructor and former dancer with the Jose Limon Company who had attended the school's summer program, and who also has extensive links with the Afro-Brazilian dance and theater communities in Bahia, Brazil.

40. Under Manley's PNP administration during the 1970s, students' tuition fees and living expenses were paid for by the government. However, this program was terminated in the 1980s, and in 1997, tuition for three years of education at the School of Dance averaged approximately J\$15,000 a year (with a 1997 exchange rate of about J\$35 = US\$1). The exchange program with SUNY-Brockport is funded by SUNY-Brockport.

41. The CXC, or Caribbean Exams, have been offered in Jamaica since the early 1980s as an alternative to the Cambridge Examinations (GC) for "O" and "A" level students (fifth and sixth forms, the equivalent of the last years of high school and the first year of university education in the United States).

42. For more on the aesthetic specificities of the NDTC, see Nettleford 1985.

43. In 1997, the JBC was privatized.

44. I thank an anonymous reviewer for directing me to clarify these points regarding origins.

45. Nettleford had originally turned away from the idea of a government-sponsored national company in order not to be beholden to one or another political agenda. Nevertheless, the Jamaica Labour Party's leader, Edward Seaga, encouraged the early development of the company. Seaga, who in his training as a social anthropologist had conducted research on the religious practice of Revival, became one of the company's first patrons, giving it access to his own collection of folk music in live performance. The succeeding People's National Party administration of Michael Manley also supported the company's work.

46. Several neighborhoods in downtown Kingston are known as political garrisons, areas in which the leadership of opposing political parties developed constituencies through promises of patronage. It has generally been argued that these areas were subsequently militarized, and that this process had engendered the considerable electoral violence that has occurred in Jamaica's recent political history, as well as the increase in the drug trade. For a fuller discussion of the more general impact of political garrisons in Jamaica see Figueroa 1996.

47. Although several female company members have also migrated, they have tended to do so to advance their careers outside of dance, though they may also become involved in dancing after emigrating. Men, on the other hand, have been more likely to migrate to further their dance careers.

48. L'ACADCO was established in 1983 by L'Antoinette Stines on her return to Jamaica from a period of living and working within the arts industries in New York City and Miami. For an examination of L'ACADCO's style and its relationship to the NDTC see Thomas 1993.

49. See Kelley 1997 (esp. chap. 2) for a comparable analysis of U.S.-based hip hop culture.

50. There has been much interest recently in Caribbean masculinities, not least as a response to contemporary popular and scholarly discourses regarding women's "ascendancy" and the decline of men's influence, opportunities, and power. A few of the contributors to the volume *Caribbean Portraits* (Barrow 1998) explicitly address the contemporary debates regarding "male marginalization" that have arisen both within the scholarly community (in part, because of the 1991 publication of Errol Miller's *Men at Risk*) and within the public sphere more generally. For a more ethnographic treatment of masculinity and gender roles in Jamaica see Chevannes 2001.

51. My thanks to the anonymous reviewer who pointed out the tension between nationalism as a strictly anticolonial struggle and nationalism as a democratizing ideology. Although some might argue that the anticolonial political leadership has been, in the main, efficient in securing its own future, irrespective of its promises toward the masses—that is, they have done what is necessary to ensure their taking over from the colonial office on independence—I am a bit less cynical. Although it is true that neither the early PNP under Norman Manley nor the early Jamaica Labour Party under his cousin, Alexander Bustamante, originally advocated popular suffrage, the party ultimately embraced mass education and the creation of small study groups throughout the island. These latter were designed to facilitate discussions regarding civics, socialism, and the PNP's proposed policies (People's National Party 1938, 1940, 1941, 1944, 1945, n.d.). In fact, the more radical and left-leaning elements within the PNP during that period espoused a commitment to political "conscientization" that continued with more support in the 1970s. I say this not to suggest that either political party had completely altruistic aims nor that either championed the culture of the "masses" as a reference point for anticolonial struggle. Indeed, neither party envisioned black working-class leadership within independent Jamaica. However, I feel it would be a mistake to suggest that their anticolonialism was solely rooted in a desire for power for themselves to the exclusion of mass concerns. Instead, I would argue even that the urban "brown" professional middle classes that predominated within the PNP during that period felt a sense of paternalistic destiny to lead and in addition, were targeted as leaders by those formulating colonial policy at the time (Simey 1946; cf. Cooper 1996)—which is not quite the same thing as a strict instrumentality.

52. See, for example, Bourdieu 1984, Foucault 1980, and Roseberry 1994.

53. This emphasis on cultural reform was not limited to that section of the nationalist elite that consolidated political power at independence. The various strands of the Jamaican left also came to view aspects of living working-class and peasant cultures as requiring intervention in order to harness their progressive potential. For a retrospective view of the Marxist left in Jamaica see Munroe 1990. David Scott, a Jamaican anthropologist, is also currently conducting research on this topic.

54. For an analysis of the kind of new opportunities available to working-class people worldwide and the ways these opportunities have been gendered see Sassen 1998.

55. For a further elaboration of these points, see Thomas in press.

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